

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

AL-QAEDA AS INSURGENCY

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ABSTRACT

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The *National Strategy for Homeland Security* designates al-Qaeda as “America’s most immediate and serious threat.” Despite the lack of consensus in academe and government on what constitutes terrorism, conventional wisdom holds that al-Qaeda is a classic transnational terrorist organization. Recently, however, some scholars have challenged that verdict, arguing instead that al-Qaeda denotes the emergence of a global Islamic insurgency. The distinction between terrorism and insurgency is not merely theoretical, as the appropriate state responses to the two phenomena are very different. This project employs Michel Wieviorka’s inversion theory to analyze al-Qaeda; the results of this methodology suggest that Osama bin Laden’s organization represents an incipient insurgency rather than a new strain of terrorism. The study then compares al-Qaeda’s strategy to that of doctrinal insurgent templates to determine the likelihood of the movement achieving its revolutionary objectives. Finally, policy prescriptions flowing from the preceding assessments are provided to refine the existing national strategy for the Global War on Terrorism.

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AL-QAEDA AS INSURGENCY

The *National Strategy for Homeland Security* designates al-Qaeda as “America’s most immediate and serious threat.”¹ Conventional wisdom, reflected in news media, public opinion and government studies such as the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, characterizes the al-Qaeda menace as one of transnational terrorism. Recently, however, some analysts have begun to challenge that conclusion. They argue instead that al-Qaeda represents the emergence of a new type of insurgency.² Assessing the nature of the enemy is a critical first step in the crafting of effective strategy. In the case of al-Qaeda, one must answer three important questions in order to clarify the extent of the danger and further hone America’s strategic response. First, does the movement actually represent an insurgency? If so, are there indeed new elements that make al-Qaeda different than previously encountered insurgencies? Finally, what implications do these answers have for the current war against Osama bin Laden’s movement? The analysis that follows suggests that al-Qaeda represents an emerging form of global Islamic insurgency the inchoate strategy of which undermines its potential to achieve revolutionary goals. Nonetheless, not unlike previous failed insurgencies, it possesses both durability and an immense capacity for destruction. These characteristics mandate a counterrevolutionary response at the strategic level that aims to destroy not only al-Qaeda’s organization but also discredit its ideological underpinnings.

TERRORISM VS. INSURGENCY: A DISTINCTION WITH A DIFFERENCE

The distinction between terrorism and insurgency is not merely theoretical, as the appropriate responses to the two phenomena are very different. Before addressing preferred strategies to counter each, one should establish how they are alike and how they differ. Unfortunately, existing definitions do more to cloud than clarify the issues. Neither academic nor government experts can agree on a suitable definition for terrorism.

The Department of Defense’s (DOD) definition focuses on the type of violence employed (unlawful) towards specified ends (political, religious or ideological).³ This characterization fails to address the argument from moral relativity that “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” In essence, this objection to a suitable definition submits that while violence may be “unlawful” in accordance with a victim’s statutes, the cause served by those committing the acts may represent a positive good in the eyes of neutral observers. In an effort to escape this dilemma, the recently recommended (but not yet approved) United Nations (UN) definition of terrorism focuses instead on the targets (civilians or noncombatants) of violence rather than on its legal nature or intended objective.⁴ Still, the UN and the DOD definitions both sidestep the

notion of state-sponsored terrorism. The DOD definition cites only unlawful violence (thereby making state terrorism an oxymoron), whereas the UN definition excludes state-sponsored terrorism and deals with state violence against civilians as bona fide war crimes or crimes against humanity under the Geneva Convention. More importantly for a strategist trying to characterize the nature of the threat, neither definition conveys exactly what distinguishes the violence of terrorism from that of an insurgency.

Definitions of insurgency have similar difficulties. DOD defines the term as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict.”⁶ Terrorist organizations with revolutionary aspirations seem to meet that criterion and thus the insurgent definition also fails analysts in differentiating one from another. Bard O’Neill comes closer to distinguishing the two phenomena by including an overtly political component in his definition of insurgency:

A struggle between a nonruling group and the ruling authorities in which the nonruling group consciously uses *political resources* (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and *violence* to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.⁶

Thus, insurgencies combine violence with political programs in pursuit of revolutionary purposes in a way that terrorism cannot duplicate. Terrorists may pursue political, even revolutionary, goals, but their violence replaces rather than complements a political program.

If definitions offer only a partial aid in discriminating between terrorism and insurgency, organizational traits have traditionally provided another means to tell the two apart. Insurgencies normally field fighting forces orders of magnitude larger than those of terrorist organizations. Typically insurgents organize their forces in military fashion as squads, platoons, and companies. Terrorist units are usually smaller and comprised of isolated teams not organized into a formal military chain of command. Insurgent forces are often more overt in nature as well, especially in the sanctuaries or zones, which they dominate. Terrorist organizations, which tend towards extreme secrecy and compartmented cells to facilitate security, seldom replicate an insurgency’s political structure.

One characteristic that does not serve to distinguish terrorism from insurgency is the use of terror tactics. Terrorists and insurgents may employ exactly the same methods, and utilize force or the threat thereof to coerce their target audiences and further the organizational agenda. Both groups may threaten, injure, or kill civilians or government employees by using an array of similar means. Thus, the use of terror in and of itself does not equate to terrorism; the former is merely a tactical tool of the latter.⁷ Lawrence Freedman suggests that the terror of

terrorists equates to “strategic” terrorism, because it is the primary means by which they pursue their agenda. However, the terror insurgents employ is more tactical in nature, since it is only one of several violent tools such groups wield.⁸ This parsing underscores the point - a variety of agents, including states, insurgents, or even criminals as well as terrorists may employ the same techniques of terror.

Given the challenges of definition and the shared use of the same tactical repertoire, it is hardly surprising that the terms terrorism and insurgency frequently appear synonymously. The State Department (DOS) register of terrorist organizations lists small, covert, cellular groups like Abu Nidal and Greece’s “Revolutionary Organization of 17 November,” as well as larger organizations with shadow governments in established zones, strong political components, and well-defined military hierarchies, such as Columbia’s FARC and the Philippine’s New People’s Army (NPA).⁹ Most analysts would characterize FARC and the NPA as insurgencies, albeit ones that employ strong doses of terror on both opponents and the surrounding populace. Not surprisingly, al-Qaeda is also on the DOS’s list of 37 foreign terrorist organizations. In an effort to determine if it belongs there, this paper will employ a third analytical framework to supplement the insights offered by existing definitions and traditional organizational characteristics.

In the 1980s the French sociologist Michel Wieviorka conducted research that determined terrorists are estranged from both the social movements that spawned them and the societies they oppose. He uses the term “social antimovement” to describe the intermediate stage between legitimate social movements and terrorism. Antimovements may employ violence, but they maintain some association with the parent social movement. It is only when that linkage dissolves, a process Wieviorka calls “inversion,” that a militant becomes a terrorist. The violence of terrorist actors no longer is purposeful – in pursuit of a rational political goal – but replaces the parent social movement’s ideology. In essence, this conclusion underscores a frequent contention in the literature on political violence: that terrorism is the domain of organizations, where the strategic repertoire of violence conflates means and ends.¹⁰

Importantly, Wieviorka’s construct does not provide a means upon which one can hang a consensus definition of terrorism. Instead it offers another means to distinguish terrorism from insurgency. Specifically, this theory posits that the degree of linkage remaining between a given radical group and its parent social movement determines what Wieviorka refers to as “pure terrorism.”¹¹ There is a connection between this notion and the broader political nature of insurgency, though it is not an angle Wieviorka himself examines. Organizations which have

not yet inverted, and which maintain connections to a significant segment of society, represent not just social antimovements, but potential insurgencies.¹²

Using the three analytical lenses – definitions, organizational traits, and Wiewiorka's inversion theory – where does al-Qaeda fall on the terrorism vs. insurgency scale? Certainly al-Qaeda meets the component tests of the various terrorism definitions: (1) unlawful (a non-state actor); (2) political/religious/ideological in intent (fatwas calling for the removal of Islamic regimes guilty of religious heresies); and (3) targeting civilians (e.g., the World Trade Center). It also comprises “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict” in accordance with the DOD's insurgency definition. In terms of exhibiting a political component, some have called al-Qaeda an armed political party and the extremist wing of a political religion.¹³ The group's political works include propaganda efforts such as the issuance of fatwas, protection and projection of Salafist religious infrastructure, and mobilization of grass roots support through cooperation with Islamist parties as well as orchestration of favorable media coverage in the Islamic press.¹⁴ The al-Qaeda training manual underscores its commitment to both politics and violence as a mechanism for change:

Islamic governments have never been and will never be, established through peaceful solutions and cooperative councils. They are established as they [always] have been by pen and gun by word and bullet by tongue and teeth.¹⁵

Finally, the terror tactics employed in pursuit of al-Qaeda's ideological goals qualifies it for either insurgent or terrorist status.

In terms of traditional characteristics of classic terrorist and insurgent organizations, al-Qaeda turns in a mixed score. It is relatively small (< 100 hard core adherents), but in Afghanistan it did train approximately 18,000 fighters, who have subsequently dispersed around the world in some 60 countries.¹⁶ Of this small army (bigger in fact than 61 of the world's 161 armies), perhaps 3,000 are true al-Qaeda troops, as opposed to mere beneficiaries of al-Qaeda tactical training.¹⁷ The small, relatively cellular structure of the hardcore suggests a terrorist organization, while the scope and scale of its dedicated, deployed militants indicates a significant, if somewhat dispersed insurgency. When al-Qaeda enjoyed political space in which to operate unhindered in Afghanistan, it conducted its business in a relatively overt manner as insurgencies usually do. Under duress since 9/11, it has regressed back to a more covert style of operation in accordance with terrorist protocol.

Wieviorka's precepts suggest that al-Qaeda has not yet inverted and transitioned to pure terrorism. Osama bin Laden's organization stemmed from the political tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood, which promised an Islamic alternative to capitalist and Marxist models of development.¹⁸ Normally, social movements such as that represented by the Muslim Brotherhood could compete effectively in an environment of democratic elections. In a Muslim landscape devoid of free elections, however, alternate ideological competitors either die out or become subversive to continue the political fight.¹⁹ Al-Qaeda represents a version of the latter. While the group's methodology of martyrdom (reflecting the radical ideology of bin Laden's Palestinian spiritual mentor Abdallah Azzam) is apocalyptic from a Western perspective, it is in accord with at least a version of the Islamic religious tradition of jihad. Thus, it is not a complete departure from its own societal norms.²⁰ Moreover, bin Laden's popularity throughout the Muslim world, the fact that the populace among whom they hide, despite the offer of large rewards, has delivered to western security forces neither he nor his chief lieutenants, and the relative lack of condemnation of his group's activities by leading Islamic clerics suggests that al-Qaeda has not severed its connection with significant segments of its social constituency.²¹

This grass roots support indicates an organization still in the social antimovement phase, rather than a terrorist group divorced from the population it claims to represent. Al-Qaeda has radically disengaged itself politically (perhaps inevitable given the autocratic nature of the regimes it opposes), is hyper aggressive towards those it perceives responsible for its political weakness (Jews, Americans and apostate Muslim leaders), and advocates a utopian dream promising a powerful yet thoroughly isolated Islamic world. Such traits are symptomatic of a social antimovement. Pure terrorism, on the other hand, might exhibit the same radical goals and appalling acts, but would result in far broader condemnation of al-Qaeda's agenda than has occurred so far throughout the Muslim world. Analysts who conclude that bin Laden is winning the war of ideas between the radical and moderate Islamic religious traditions further reinforce the counterintuitive determination that al-Qaeda is not (yet) a terrorist organization.²² Such evidence indicates a growing linkage between the purveyors of violence and the polity they claim to represent. Purposeful political violence committed on behalf of a sizable segment of society suggests insurgency. Importantly, the judgment that al-Qaeda has not descended into terrorism is not to sanction the group's horrific conduct or render support for its political objectives. Instead it represents an effort to assess al-Qaeda's current status, accurately portray its nature, and thereby help determine how best to combat it.

Combating terrorism and insurgency requires different strategic responses. Certainly both pose significant threats to the United States. Terrorists, in an age of transnational cooperation

and access to weapons of mass destruction, have the means to unleash catastrophic attacks on modern societies that dwarf even the terrible blows of 9/11. But terrorism, however powerful in a destructive sense, remains the province of the politically weak. Terrorists are physically and psychologically removed from broad popular support. Because terrorists remain isolated from the social movements from which they sprang and their political goals become, over time, more and more divorced from reality, it is neither necessary nor possible to negotiate with them. They are a blight, like crime, that one cannot eliminate but which states must control to limit their impact on society. Of course, states must hunt terrorists possessing the means and will to conduct catastrophic attacks not only with national and international police resources, but also with all the diplomatic, informational, military and economic instruments of national power.

However, states must handle insurgents differently, because they represent both a political and a military challenge. They combine an ideologically motivated leadership with an unsatisfied citizenry (the so-called 'grievance guerrillas') into a challenge to existing governments. Only a war of ideas can confront and defeat ideologies. An integrated counterinsurgency (COIN) program that enables the targeted government to offer more appealing opportunities than the insurgents' (doubtless utopian) vision must peel away popular support. Finally, a successful approach must identify and systematically neutralize the insurgent strategy's operational elements. Al-Qaeda represents not terrorism, but an insurgency featuring a Salafist theology which appeals to significant portions of Muslim believers and which sanctifies terror. The next section will explore whether the nascent insurgency has the strategic wherewithal to enact revolutionary change.

AL-QAEDA'S INSURGENCY: A POLICY – STRATEGY MISMATCH

Islamic insurgency is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, historically it has not been a successful one.²³ Moreover, as Lawrence Freedman notes, revolutions that rely on terror as the primary means of political violence court strategic failure.²⁴ Does al-Qaeda's methodology promise a different outcome? The movement's goals are revolutionary; they envision remaking society such that religious faith is foundational, social stratification is enforced, and the government is autocratic in nature and controlled by clerics. The Islamist governments of Iran, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Sudan illustrate an approach to the ideal. Al-Qaeda intends to establish like regimes in lieu of apostate Muslim governments such as those of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The new Salafist administrations would strictly enforce Sharia law and block military and cultural inroads of the West. Al-Qaeda's political objective, then, remains unlimited vis-à-vis targeted Islamic regimes. It seeks to overthrow their form of government. With regard

to the United States, the group's political objectives are more limited: to coerce America to withdraw from the Middle East and abandon its sponsorship of Israel.²⁵

While it is important to classify an insurgency's type and understand its goals, the operative question is how the movement uses the means at its disposal to achieve its desired ends – in other words what strategy it employs. It is not enough to have a guiding ideology and a susceptible body politic with significant, and potentially exploitable, grievances against the existing government. In the operational realm, something must connect the two. Without this critical linkage, ideologies may produce terrorists and grievances may spawn rebellions. But it is only when ideology and grievances combine that insurgencies result.²⁶ Understanding how strategy effects that combination provides insight into the best ways to counter a particular insurgency. Current doctrine identifies two basic insurgent strategies: mass mobilization (best illustrated by Mao Tse-Tung's people's war construct) and armed action (featuring either rural based *foco* or urban warfare oriented styles).²⁷

Al-Qaeda exhibits an interesting blend of both insurgent strategies. Primarily bin Laden's movement employs the urban warfare version of the armed action strategy. Certainly most of the group's activities have been military rather than political in nature. It has not sought to use rural-based military forces to court recruits and wage a systematic campaign of destruction against target governments. Instead, al-Qaeda has employed violence against both government and civilian targets to create instability and undermine the confidence and political will of its enemies. Small, covert teams employing creative suicide techniques planned and executed its attacks against the *USS Cole*, the Khobar Tower barracks in Saudi Arabia, and the World Trade Center / Pentagon.

Al-Qaeda has not adopted a mass mobilization strategy, but it does employ some of Mao's key concepts. The Chinese Communist Party's carefully managed mass line finds its analog in the Islamic madrasahs, mosques and media outlets. These forums publicize bin Laden's philosophy, capture and echo the people's complaints, and conjoin the ideology and grievances in a perfect storm of revolutionary fervor. Islamic madrasahs, mosques and media also provide a suitable venue for aspects of political warfare. Bin Laden's attempts to communicate directly with and threaten the American people have been neither sophisticated nor effective, but they do illustrate an effort to address his enemy's political vulnerabilities. Al-Qaeda has also proven quite willing to cooperate, in a virtual united front, with a long list of otherwise dubious allies including Shiite Hezbollah, secular Baathist officials, and Chinese criminal syndicates.²⁸ International support for al-Qaeda is important. Since the displacement of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban party, primary support comes from countries such as Iran and

Syria as well as a host of like-minded state and regional insurgencies and terrorist organizations.²⁹

Mao's prescription for protracted war is also in keeping with al-Qaeda's brand of Islamic revolutionary war. The mujahedin employed long term guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan to drive out the Soviets; bin Laden looks to replicate that success in a similar protracted campaign against America.³⁰ In addition to the small unit attacks characteristic of traditional guerrilla warfare, the larger operations conducted by thousands of al-Qaeda trained soldiers in Afghanistan against the Russians (and later the Northern Alliance) indicate that bin Laden does not oppose amassing and employing more conventional military power if the time, resources and political space permit. For example, bin Laden's May 2001 communiqué calls for the formation of a 10,000 man army to liberate Saudi Arabia.³¹

When denied the opportunity to fight conventionally, al-Qaeda is willing to fall back on a more limited urban warfare strategy. Such a strategy is in consonance with a protracted war timeline, if not the ponderous methodology of its Maoist antecedent. Urban warfare seeks only to disrupt, not to build a conventional force capable of challenging government forces in pitched battles. It subverts targeted governments in preparation for the day when military action may remove a greatly weakened regime. Regardless which military strategy al-Qaeda employs, it is apparent that bin Laden has the long view of history necessary to persevere in a protracted war. His religious faith is unperturbed by short-term setbacks or the lack of immediate progress in unseating target governments. Even death in combat is seen as motivational for those warriors who follow in the footsteps of the martyred mujahedin.³²

While al-Qaeda does not use the same mobilization techniques Mao's strategy employed, it nonetheless benefits from similar operational effects achieved in a different way. The purpose of covert infrastructure is to operationalize control of human terrain.³³ The shadow government provides or controls education, tax collection, civil and military recruiting services, public works, economic infrastructure development and operation, police functions and legal adjudication. While there is no evidence of an al-Qaeda equivalent to a communist style covert infrastructure as seen in China, Malaya, or Vietnam, the radical Islamic religious movement has developed a construct that militant ideologues could subvert and employ to attain the same ends. Bard O'Neill notes that religious institutions may replicate the parallel hierarchies of covert infrastructure and that religious inducement is more compelling to potential insurgent recruits than secular ideology.³⁴

The militant Islamist construct that illustrates such a parallel hierarchy is a virtual counter state known as the *da'wa*.³⁵ Grassroots social programs comprise this alternate society, which

is designed to prove the efficacy of fundamentalist policies and gradually build a mass base that will eventually translate into political power. The da'wa includes associations of middle class professionals, Islamic welfare agencies, schools and student groups, nongovernmental humanitarian assistance organizations, clinics, and mosques. These venues advance political ideas and sometimes instigate mass protests. Though this overt nucleus of a parallel government has developed in nations such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, it has not yet attained the revolutionary capacity exhibited by Maoist people's war covert infrastructure. Opposition parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood have not been able to leverage this latent source of organizational strength into a successful challenge to sitting governments.³⁶ Theodore Gurr observes that the existence of dissent options like the da'wa sometimes bleed off revolutionary potential energy and actually make successful insurrection less likely rather than facilitating its advance.³⁷ The da'wa's capacity as a conduit for Maoist style political mobilization is nonetheless striking.

The strategy of al-Qaeda is thus a blending of the more familiar mass mobilization and armed action strategies. Some of the factors that made Mao's people war strategy effective are also present in al-Qaeda's twist on "making revolution." The religious foundation of al-Qaeda's ideology and the devout nature of the societies it seeks to co-opt create a novel dynamic with a potentially new way of connecting means to ends. So far this potential is unrealized. In the modern era, radical Muslims have applied the coercive social control consistent with bin Laden's brand of Islam only following the seizure of political power. In Iran, Afghanistan and Sudan the da'wa did not serve as a virtual counter state as shadow governments do in Maoist people's war. But in the future al-Qaeda may not have to replicate Mao's secular infrastructure because alternate mechanisms of control are already resident in the target societies. The challenge for Islamic insurgents is to transition the da'wa's capacity for social influence into one of alternate political control.

Whether or not such an evolution proves feasible, al-Qaeda's armed action approach seeks to achieve its limited political objectives versus the United States via a military strategy of erosion. That is, additional strikes of sufficient magnitude could induce America to reconsider its policy options in the Middle East.³⁸ In addition to the strategic intent of influencing enemy policy, these attacks also serve to: mobilize the Muslim world; generate recruits, money, and prestige; demonstrate the global capacity to disrupt; and provide a forum for a kind of 'performance violence' that symbolically underscores the righteousness of its cause.³⁹ Failure to harness a more potent political component with its military erosion option, however, means that al-Qaeda is less likely to overthrow targeted Islamic regimes. The unlimited political

objective associated with the constrained military means creates a fatal policy-strategy mismatch that dooms its insurgency to failure.⁴⁰

Thus far this paper has established that al-Qaeda's connection to the people in a number of Islamic countries means that its methodology is not terrorism but a kind of insurgency. The strategy of that insurgency, combining a variety of forms and styles in pursuit of both limited and unlimited political goals, demonstrates the ability to disrupt on a massive level, but less likelihood of actually enacting revolutionary change. The final question is how to modify existing policies to better address the peculiar nature of the emerging al-Qaeda threat.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY POLICY

The insurgent nature of the al-Qaeda threat suggests that the United States and its allies must counter the enemy's ideology, his strategy and the grievances he seeks to manipulate. The Army's October 2004 Interim COIN Operations Field Manual, FMI 3-07.22, mentions all of these aspects of the struggle. Though the new FMI recognizes al-Qaeda as an insurgency, it does not speak to the unique challenges inherent in battling the first global insurgent movement. Some of the traditional COIN prescriptions are difficult to apply to a netted, transnational movement like al-Qaeda. For example, 'clear and hold' tactics do not work when the opponent disperses across 60 nations around the globe. Similarly, sanctuary is no longer a state or even a regional problem; with a global threat it becomes an international issue. The scope of the challenge increases vastly when potential sponsors include not only nations such as Iran, Sudan and Syria, but also regions in turmoil such as Chechnya and failed states such as Somalia.

Unlike extant COIN doctrine, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* does not recognize the insurgent nature of the al-Qaeda threat. Instead the document characterizes al-Qaeda as a multinational terrorist network. Nonetheless, the methodology laid out in the strategy incorporates a variety of COIN techniques. These include winning the war of ideas, eliminating sanctuaries, interdicting external support, and diminishing underlying conditions.⁴¹ Interestingly, the National War College student report that inspired much of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) strategy paper concluded that al-Qaeda represented an evolution of terrorism which the authors dubbed "pansurgency." The students defined this phenomenon as "an organized movement of nonstate actors aimed at the overthrow of values, cultures, or societies on a global level through the use of subversion and armed conflict, with the ultimate goal of establishing a new world order."⁴² That conclusion was the most important idea in the study that did not make it into the National Security Council's (NSC) approved GWOT strategy

paper. Doubtless the NSC preferred the illegitimacy inherent in the terrorist label rather than the ambiguity associated with an insurgent status.

Greater emphasis on COIN methodology, however, would have improved the national counterterrorism strategy's prescriptions for addressing al-Qaeda's ideology, strategy and exploitation of grievances. Addressing grievances is essentially a tactical response. The current strategy rightly indicates that championing market-based economies, good governance, and the rule of law mitigates the conditions that enemies exploit to recruit insurgents.⁴³ But experience in Haiti, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq indicates the overwhelming resource challenges inherent in such nation building. "Draining the swamp" as a means of removing grievances based on poverty, lack of education, poor medical care, and culturally induced violence is a generational investment and fiscally prohibitive even on a state level, much less in a regional sense. Thus the most effective means to resolve grievances is not through development or repair of shattered infrastructure, but via reform of the targeted state's political process. Broadened opportunity to participate in the *sine qua non* of politics – the decisions about who gets what – undermines radical Islamic movements' protected status in much of the Muslim world as virtually the only available option through which to express dissent. Al-Qaeda is a religiously inspired revolutionary movement, but fundamentally it is political in nature.⁴⁴ Thus competitors offering different solutions for extant social, economic and political grievances most threaten the movement's political potential. In a largely non-democratic Islamic world, however, a move to greater electoral participation is fully as revolutionary as the theocratic vision peddled by bin Laden and consequently remains a diplomatic hurdle of the highest order.

At the operational level, the GWOT strategy identifies a number of useful diplomatic, informational, military and economic instruments for use against al-Qaeda. The paper endorses a military strategy of annihilation, but it does not identify a defeat mechanism. Against mass mobilization style insurgencies, destruction of the covert infrastructure is the preferred defeat mechanism. Al-Qaeda exerts far less control over a targeted population because its strategy establishes no shadow government, but the organization remains much more elusive as a result. Sir Robert Thompson recognized the dilemma posed by insurgencies without infrastructure. He noted that either organization or causes are the vital factors behind insurgencies; which one pertains dictates the appropriate strategic response.⁴⁵

If Maoist people's war features organizational strength, then the American Revolution illustrates insurgency motivated by an idea. The colonies possessed a degree of local government, but they lacked the kind of pervasive organizational control that would ensure citizens had to support the revolutionary movement. Instead the glue that held the insurgency

together was the popular idea of political independence. Similarly, al-Qaeda's strength lies in the appeal of its Salafist/Wahhabian philosophy. This insight suggests that al-Qaeda has no structural center of gravity at the operational level. This verdict reflects the amorphous strategy employed by the group thus far and reflects its lack of success in either toppling Islamic governments or causing the West to withdraw from the Middle East. But it also underscores the tremendous potential energy possessed by a movement whose ideas powerfully appeal to a sizable minority throughout the Muslim world.

Such an assessment dictates a different kind of response at the strategic level. The conflict is one between competing visions of Islam. Moderate Islam is willing and able to accommodate modernism; radical Islam insists that the religion return to the halcyon days of the seventh and eighth centuries. This is a civil war of sorts, and one which the West is poorly positioned to referee and ill-suited to encourage or end. The contest is not the venue of an information operation writ large. Rather it is the age old and fundamental debate on religion's role in governance. Each people must make its own choice; Madison Avenue marketing techniques and western-style politics are neither necessary nor sufficient to sway the result. Instead a sophisticated form of political warfare must support and encourage moderate governments that champion tolerant forms of the Islamic faith while opposing religious fascism. The *National Security* and *Combating Terrorism* strategies mention but do not stress this war of ideas.⁴⁶ It deserves more emphasis and attention because failure in this arena will render moot even the destruction of al-Qaeda. Osama bin Laden's movement is merely representative of the threat posed by Salafist theology. Other groups, though less well known, harbor similar political objectives and the conflict will continue until the underlying ideas are rejected by the Muslim umma. The threat posed by radical Islam today resembles that posed in 1917 by communism – a bad idea poised to justify the spread of totalitarianism.⁴⁷

The strategic challenge is to discredit a fascist religious ideology before victim states experience a century of social, economic and political oppression and recognize too late that Wahhabism is simply another failed philosophy of government. Key to meeting that challenge is to recognize threats as they are rather than as one wishes them to be. The present *National Security Strategy* fails this charge when it claims the enemy is terrorism rather than the ideology that justifies the terror. This analysis confuses the symptom for the disease. The real problem is a religiously inspired political ideology whose specified end state is global hegemony. Al-Qaeda exemplifies this ideology and represents an emerging danger that demands a clear policy response. Such a policy should promulgate a comprehensive new doctrine encompassing the following elements:

- The United States opposes those nations whose governments embrace Salafist jihadist ideology.⁴⁸
- The United States will seek to contain the spread of Salafist jihadist ideology.
- The United States will hold accountable those nations that host, sponsor, or support Salafist jihadist groups.
- The United States will support allies (or nations whose survival is considered vital to its security) if Salafist jihadist nations or movements threaten their sovereignty.

A doctrine such as this, not unlike Cold War-era anticomunist policies, clarifies the national position, while enabling political leaders to protect American interests by selectively supporting authoritarian allies and/or encouraging political reform. This choice, reflecting the persistent foreign policy tension between idealism and realpolitik, remains the essence of effective diplomacy.

Choosing wisely between idealism and realism is challenging and important because the militant Islamic threat which al-Qaeda represents is not monolithic in nature.⁴⁹ Branches of al-Qaeda and organizations similar to bin Laden's may be different in important ways. In the early days of the Cold War, the West thought the communist threat was monolithic; time and experience proved that it was not. Neither is the Salafist threat. All politics are local – even the politics of religion. COIN strategists must therefore evaluate each case on its own merits.

While Islamic militants may cooperate with each other in a global fashion, the program they craft to topple a particular government requires independent analysis and a counterrevolutionary strategy that recognizes and leverages local conditions. It is also important to remember that insurgency is only one way to enact social and/or political change. Revolutions also occur peacefully (as the Shah of Iran learned in 1979), via coup (as Lenin demonstrated in 1917) or even by the ballot box (with the prospect of 'one man, one vote, one time' should a totalitarian party win).⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

Al-Qaeda is the most deadly of the more than 100 Islamic militant groups formed over the past 25 years.⁵¹ The danger it poses flows from its willingness to employ weapons of mass effect, its global reach, its focus on targeting America, and most importantly its revolutionary and expansionist ideology.⁵² The size of bin Laden's organization, its political goals, and its enduring relationship with a fundamentalist Islamic social movement provide strong evidence that al-Qaeda is not a terrorist group but an insurgency. Armed action is its primary strategy, but there are intriguing aspects of mass mobilization techniques that serve to strengthen its

organizational impact and resiliency. Elements unique to its methodology include transnational networking and a multi-ethnic constituency.⁵³ Together these factors comprise an evolving style of spiritually based insurgency that is somewhat different than the Maoist people's war model which underwrites most COIN doctrine.⁵⁴

The disparate nature of the threat – in essence a global, but somewhat leisurely paced guerrilla war - makes it difficult to focus an effective strategic response. But al-Qaeda's organizational and strategic choices also make it tough for the movement to concentrate its power in ways that achieve its political ends. Thus far no targeted Islamic government has fallen to al-Qaeda inspired violence. Nor have bin Laden's attacks compelled or coerced America to alter its policies in the Middle East. The resulting contest of wills is classically asymmetric. Long term success for the United States will require support for true political reform, a revolutionary cause in itself, among autocratic Islamic governments. This path, though potentially destabilizing in the short term, holds more promise in the long run as radical Islamic insurgents are forced to compete with more moderate political rivals in the market place of ideas.

A clear policy – one that identifies Salafist ideology as the problem and enunciates America's opposition to the politics of jihad - is essential. Victory also demands delegitimizing the radical Wahhabian strain of Islam that considers the killing of civilians not just a useful tactic but also a religious imperative. This goal, though beyond the means of a non-Muslim country to effect independently, is the crux of the issue. The rise of Islamic fascism, championed by groups such as al-Qaeda, is the central strategic problem of the age. Only victory in the simmering campaign against the emerging global Islamic insurgency will prevent that challenge from evolving into a much longer and more brutal clash of civilizations.

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ENDNOTES

¹ George W. Bush, *National Strategy for Homeland Security* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 16 July 2002), vii.

² According to this school, much of what Ian Lesser et al., characterize as a new form of terrorism in their study *Countering the New Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA; RAND, 1999) is in fact a new version of insurgency. See for example: Anonymous, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2002), xvii, 24, 279; Paul Rich, "Al Qaeda and the Radical Islamic Challenge to Western Strategy," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 46 (Spring 2003): 46; Thomas R. Mockaitis, "Winning Hearts and Minds in the 'War on Terrorism,'" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 14 (Spring 2003): 21, 37; James Risen, "Evolving Nature of Al Qaeda is Misunderstood, Critic Says," *New York Times*, 8 November 2004, sec. A, p. 18; Kimbra L. Fishel, "Challenging the Hegemon: Al Qaeda's Elevation of Asymmetric Insurgent Warfare onto the Global Arena," *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement* 11 (Winter 2002): 286, 290; John P. Sullivan and Robert J. Bunker, "Multi-Lateral Counter-Insurgency Networks," *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement* 11 (Winter 2002): 353, 364, 366; Rohan Gunaratna, "The Genealogy of Al Qaeda," *Gaiko Forum* 14 (Fall 2004): 16; Michael Vlahos, *Terror's Mask: Insurgency within Islam* (Laurel, MD: Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, 2002), 1-28 *passim*. Only the last of these studies attempts to establish why the threat constitutes insurgency instead of terrorism. The others simply assert that insurgency is the issue and then prescribe various remedies. Vlahos uses a cultural construct to establish the relationship between violence and the political movement it serves. He terms the existential negotiation between insurgent and regime "civilizational insurgency" - a notion that amounts to a contest for legitimacy. Terrorism, then, is not just a type of political violence, but "...an expression of changing relationships within culture and society." (p. 7) Of note is that, with regard to the threat's status as terrorist or insurgent, Vlahos arrives at a similar judgment as this essay via a different analytical methodology.

³ "Terrorism - the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological." Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 12 April 2001), 428.

⁴ The recommended UN definition reads: "any action, in addition to actions already specified by the existing conventions on aspects of terrorism, the Geneva Conventions and Security Council resolution 1566 (2004), that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act." United Nations, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (New York: United Nations, 2004), 51-52.

⁵ Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 207.

⁶ Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1990), 13.

⁷ The distinction between terror and terrorism is a common theme in the writings of Dr. Thomas A. Marks, perhaps the foremost authority on Maoist insurgency. See for example his

exposition on the use of terror by the Philippine insurgents of the New People's Army in Thomas A. Marks, *Maoist Insurgency since Vietnam* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 151-173.

⁸ Lawrence Freedman, "Terrorism and Strategy," in *Terrorism and International Order*, Lawrence Freedman, Christopher Hill, Adam Roberts, R.J. Vincent, Paul Wilkinson and Philip Windsor (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1986), 58.

⁹ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations* (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress Congressional Research Service, 2004), 1-3, 22-23, 83-86, 90-92, 96-97.

¹⁰ Michel Wieviorka, *The Making of Terrorism*, trans. David Gordon White (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 3-41, 61-77. Wieviorka conducted a comparative analysis of four sets of terrorist groups. He investigated the nature of the relationships among the terrorists themselves, the social movements they originated from and the polities they sought to change. Wieviorka determined that the relationship between a terrorist and his parent social movement has been destroyed. The social movement's radicalized terrorist descendent has abandoned his roots and the people whose message he claimed to champion. Over time, the violence of terrorism tends to become more nihilistic and its perpetrators less lucid.

Wieviorka's social antimovement construct explains the devolution of legitimate social movements (such as proletarian labor or Palestinian nationalism) to a state of terrorism. Groups in this in-between status become the antithesis of their parent social movement. The antimovements begin to advocate abstract notions that no longer reflect the real issues of the original interest group. For antimovements, political rivals become threats that must be fought or destroyed rather than competed against or negotiated with. Eventually these groups undergo radical disengagement from existing political systems. Soon utopian goals mandate destruction of existing social compacts in order to erect a new reality.

Wieviorka asserts that social antimovements are similar in nature to totalitarian states and certain religious sects – the combination of which can produce the Islamic fascism of the Taliban. The extreme form of such antimovements may spin off terrorist groups the way Abu Nidal's cell emerged from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (social movement) and Fatah (social antimovement). The process by which this divorce occurs is termed inversion. Inversion transitions an already separated group from a stance of defensive aloofness to one of radical ideological offensiveness; the associated terrorist violence becomes increasingly apocalyptic and even self-consuming.

With regard to terrorism's conflation of means and ends, The Quranic Concept of War states it plainly: "Terror struck into the hearts of the enemies is not only a means, it is the end in itself....Terror is not a means of imposing decision upon the enemy; it is the decision we wish to impose upon him." Quoted in Yossef Bodansky, *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing, 1999), xv.

¹¹ Wieviorka, 63, 290, 297.

¹² Wieviorka, in fact, uses the term insurgency interchangeably with the term terrorism in his sociological analysis. The author is indebted to Dr. Thomas A. Marks for the insights which application of Wieviorka's theory provide to differentiating terrorism and insurgency.

¹³ Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 240; Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2003), 12; *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 162-164.

¹⁴ Al-Qaeda has requested Islamic political parties to do propaganda, fund-raising and recruiting on its behalf in order to "free a warrior to fight." Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 226. The term "Salafist" refers to those who seek to copy the way the earliest Muslims practiced Islam. "Wahhabi" refers to followers of the eighteenth century puritanical Arab mullah Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. As Jason Burke notes, "Bin Laden and his fellow extremists are Millenarian, fundamentalist, reformist, revivalist, Wahhabi/Salafi and, at least in their rootedness in modernity if not their programme, Islamist." Burke, 38-39. This essay uses both Wahhabi and Salafist to describe al-Qaeda.

¹⁵ Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 5.

¹⁶ Bruce Hoffman, "The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27 (November-December, 2004): 552; Burke, 10.

¹⁷ Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 8. For listings of world army strengths, see "Armed Forces of the World," available from <<http://www.strategypage.com/fyeo/howtomakewar/databases/armies/default.asp>>; Internet; accessed 29 January 2005.

¹⁸ For background on the Muslim Brotherhood, see John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1992), 120-133. For the Muslim Brotherhood's relationship to al-Qaeda, see Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 96.

¹⁹ Of 41 countries with populations at least 2/3 Muslim, the annual Freedom House assessment lists none as free (protecting both political and civic rights). Eight are shown as 'partially free' while the rest are categorized as 'not free'. Seven of the eleven states listed as most repressive are Muslim. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 499. Of the 57 members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Bernard Lewis credits only Turkey with political, social and economic freedom. Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 163. When religious dissidents do become subversive due to a lack of political 'space', they enjoy some advantages over their secular competitors because even ruthless tyrants have difficulty suppressing the religious infrastructure that shields the opposition. See Lewis, 23, 133.

²⁰ For the impact Azzam had on bin Laden, see Burke, 68-71. For a discussion of al-Qaeda's apocalyptic qualities, see Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 93-94.

²¹ Shibley Telhami, a University of Maryland professor who conducted a poll of Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and the UAE discovered that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden tied for fourth place on a list of most admired world leaders behind Jacques Chirac of France (1st), deceased Egyptian president Nasser (2d) and Hezbollah's leader in Lebanon (3d). Telhami agrees there is a battle for hearts and minds afoot. "But, unfortunately, things went the way al Qaeda wanted them to go rather than the way the U.S.

wanted them to go in terms of public opinion....What we're seeing now is a disturbing sympathy with al Qaeda coupled with resentment toward the United States." Dafna Linzer, "Polls Showing Growing Arab Rancor at U.S.," 23 July 2004; available from <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A7080-2004Jul22.html>>; Internet; accessed 10 February 2005. Some 60 percent of British Muslims believe al-Qaeda is "fighting the right fight," while 95 percent of Saudi middle class and professional men between the ages of 21 and 45 supported bin Laden in a 2002 poll. Vlahos, 19-20. The 9/11 Commission Report cites similarly negative polling data. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), 375.

²² Burke, 5-6; Yossef Bodansky, *The Secret History of the Iraq War* (New York: Regan Books, 2004), xvi-xvii. The virulent Wahhabi strain of Islam, combining intolerance with a call to jihad, is promulgated in particular by Saudi Arabia. That country alone established some 1,500 mosques, 210 Islamic centers, and 2,000 madrasahs worldwide between 1982 and 2002. This level of proselytizing accounts, at least in part, for the increasing popularity of radical Islam and its sanction of political violence. Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003), 12-13, 126.

²³ Henry Munson, Jr., *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 104, 125-137.

²⁴ Freedman, 65.

²⁵ There are those who argue that al-Qaeda's long term objective encompasses nothing less than the destruction of the United States and the West. See Earl H. Tilford, "The War on Terror: World War IV," *ROA National Security Report* (Washington, D.C.: October 2004), 37-44.

²⁶ Thomas Marks' work stresses the critical linkage between the ideology of the dissident leadership and the practical grievances of the masses. He sees mobilization, orchestrated by covert political infrastructure, as the key operational connector between insurgent leaders and their followers. See Marks, *Maoist Insurgency since Vietnam*, 285-288; Thomas A. Marks, "Ideology of Insurgency: New Ethnic Focus or Old Cold War Distortions?" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 15 (Spring 2004): 107-128; Thomas A. Marks, "Evaluating Insurgent / Counterinsurgent Performance," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 11 (Winter 2000): 33-34.

²⁷ Department of the Army. *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Field Manual-Interim No. 3-07.22 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1 October 2004), 1-5 to 1-7. Each style exhibits strengths that make it dangerous and weaknesses that leave it vulnerable. Mass mobilization is best exemplified by the people's war waged by Mao Tse-Tung's Chinese communist party (CCP). Mao's experience and writings provided, in essence, a blueprint for insurgency that has been the most successful and thus most widely copied strategy. People's war emphasizes politics over military considerations. Accordingly, Mao's strategy is designed to build strength in a gradual fashion rather than seize power in a lightning strike. Key operational elements of that strategy include the mass line, the united front, political warfare, covert infrastructure, protracted war and international support. The mass line is a feedback mechanism that translates the people's complaints into elements of the party's pronounced policy. The united front is a broad assemblage of social movements, political parties, and trade organizations that also oppose the existing government. The insurgency makes common cause with these organizations when convenient and looks to infiltrate and subvert as many as possible in a bid to broaden its own base and power. Political warfare – the concerted use of

soft power (such as propaganda, public diplomacy and subversion of the enemy's political or media elements) – is used to enhance the party's own political position while undermining that of the enemy. Infrastructure is the covert "shadow government" that is built and employed to gradually wrest control of the population from the existing government. This infrastructure is also the primary link between revolutionary leaders and their followers – it is the mechanism by which control of the human terrain is forged. Protracted war, perhaps the most well known of Mao's devices, makes a virtue of military weakness by starting with local guerrilla forces and then developing them into larger, more capable mobile formations and ultimately regular units that engage the enemy in conventional combat. This progression is phased, starting with the strategic defensive, then a period of preparation for offensive operations and culminating with the assumption of the strategic offensive. International support is the final pillar in the Maoist strategic construct. It stresses the importance of external diplomatic, military and economic assistance for the insurgency and/or hindrance of the target government. Mao's thoughts on his strategy may be found in Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Military Writing of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967). General overviews of Maoist strategy are available in John Ellis, *From the Barrel of a Gun: A History of Guerrilla, Revolutionary and Counter-Insurgency Warfare, from the Romans to the Present* (London: Greenhill Books, 1995), 177-199 and O'Neill, 34-41.

The armed action option subordinates political to military considerations. Mobilization of the population and patient development of covert infrastructure do not play critical roles in this strategy. Instead the operational link between grievance-inspired followers and ideology-driven leaders is the campaign of violence itself in this style of insurgency. Subcategories of this approach include rural-based *foco* insurgencies and urban warfare insurgencies. The former is best illustrated by the Cuban revolution. *Foco* insurgencies are marked by a relatively small military force that commences guerrilla operations and recruits additional membership via the success of its military strikes. These strikes create new and exacerbate existing grievances of the people. O'Neill, 41-45. There is no separate party that directs military conduct; instead, in the words of Regis Debray "... the guerrilla force is the party in embryo." Regis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 106. *Foco* strategies have not been particularly successful outside of Cuba; they lack the staying power that mass mobilization provides and have no reserve manpower available to tap following catastrophic military setbacks.

The urban warfare variation of the armed action strategy features raids, bombings, assassinations and sabotage against political and economic targets in the target country's leading cities. The goal is to create chaos and discredit the government in the eyes of its people. The population's loss of confidence in the government's ability to provide the first mandate of its charter – security for its citizens – may lead the citizenry to side with the insurgents. This strategy is clearly at work in contemporary Iraq. Without an analytical framework such as Wieviorka's, the urban warfare strategy is hard to distinguish from similar patterns of terrorism. Palestine in 1947, Cyprus in 1958, and South Yemen in 1967 provide successful examples of urban warfare. Otherwise this style has proven as barren as its *foco* counterpart because effective police and security forces have been able to either mitigate or destroy urban insurgents. See O'Neill, 45-47; Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), 343-352. Laqueur equates "urban guerrilla warfare" to terrorism (p. xi), but his description of the strategy and its development is useful. Moreover, he concludes that the style is relatively ineffective due to its lack of an adequate political component, 404.

²⁸ Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 146-149; Simon Reeve, *The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama Bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 216-219; *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 56.

²⁹ Bodansky, *The Secret History of the Iraqi War*, 304, 310, 345-346, 405-406, 426, 430, 427, 439. For evidence of collaboration with Iraq on the development of chemical weapons, see *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 124, 188-189. Between 1996 and 1998, 10 percent of Osama bin Laden's phone calls were placed to locations in Iran. Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 12.

³⁰ Don D. Chipman, "Osama bin Laden and Guerrilla War," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26 (May-June 2003): 155-167; Hoffman, 555.

³¹ Burke, 128. For al-Qaeda's appreciation of the merits of conventional fighting, see *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 104-105.

³² For the use of terror in support of a protracted war methodology, see Lesser et al., 39. On al-Qaeda's preference for suicide attacks, see Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 91-92.

³³ The notion of covert political infrastructure as a mechanism to "dominate human terrain" is a key insight found throughout much of Dr. Thomas A. Marks' work on Maoist insurgency. See for example Thomas A. Marks, "Urban Insurgency," *Small Wars & Insurgency* 14 (Autumn 2003): 142. For a series of case studies on insurgent infrastructure in Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Peru, see Marks, *Maoist Insurgency since Vietnam*, 26-34, 96-110 and 154-169, 189-194, 261-268 respectively. The salient point with respect to Islamic insurgency is to what degree infrastructure, or something like it, pertains as a viable mechanism for attaining political power.

³⁴ O'Neill, 77, 93.

³⁵ Da'wa is not to be confused with the Islamic al-Da'wa political party in Iraq (a descendent of an Iranian-backed Shiite revolutionary movement founded in 1958). Rather it is a type of Islamic proselytizing that, in effect, has morphed into a way of seeking what Emmanuel Sivan calls "'re-Islamization from below,' the long-term infiltration into society's every nook and cranny as a way to gain eventual political control." See Emmanuel Sivan, "Why Radical Muslims Aren't Taking Over Governments," in *Revolutionaries and Reformers: Contemporary Islamist Movements in the Middle East* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 4.

³⁶ Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1996), 61-66; Sivan, 1-9; Barry Rubin, ed., *Revolutionaries and Reformers: Contemporary Islamist Movements in the Middle East* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 211. More than 20 percent of the Islamic NGOs worldwide have been infiltrated by radical militant organizations. Many Islamic NGOs were originally established and remain controlled by these militant forces, which use these organizations as fronts to radicalize and mobilize unsuspecting populations. Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 6, 227, 239.

³⁷ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 354-355.

³⁸ For an assessment of al-Qaeda's evolving strategy with regard to non-United States targets, see Byrnjar Lia and Thomas Hegghamer, "Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged Al Qaida Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27 (September-October, 2004): 355-375.

³⁹ Lesser et al., 41, 89-90; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 124; Burke, 163.

⁴⁰ Brad McAlister concludes that al-Qaeda will fail for another reason – the inherent inefficiencies of its chosen networked organizational construct. Specifically, he posits that the group's size and complexity are disadvantages rather than virtues as usually assumed. See Brad McAllister, "Al Qaeda and the Innovative Firm: Demystifying the Network," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27 (July-August 2004): 297-319.

⁴¹ George W. Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 2003), 21-24.

⁴² National War College Student Task Force on Combating Terrorism, *Combating Terrorism in a Globalized World* (Washington, D.C.: National War College, 2002), 10.

⁴³ Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 23.

⁴⁴ Marks, "The Ideology of Insurgency: New Ethnic Focus or Old Cold War Distortions?" 125.

⁴⁵ Robert Thompson, *Revolutionary War in World Strategy, 1945-1969* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1970), 8-9.

⁴⁶ George W. Bush, *The National Security of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002), 6; Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 23-24. The importance of political warfare is a common refrain among both counterinsurgent and counterterrorist strategists. The problem is that no one is quite certain how to operationalize the concept. See Paul Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, *Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on al Qaeda* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 46-47 and Stephen Biddle, "War Aims and War Termination," in *Defeating Terrorism: Strategic Issue Analyses*, ed. John R. Martin (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), 10-12.

⁴⁷ The Soviet analogy was posed to a Washington, D.C. foreign policy symposium by General John Abizaid, USA, Commanding General of U.S. Central Command, in October 2004. See David Ignatius, "Achieving Real Victory Could Take Decades," *Washington Post*, 26 December 2004, p. B1.

⁴⁸ "Salafist jihadists" is the term employed by General Abizaid to describe the generic militant Islamic threat which al-Qaeda exemplifies. See Ignatius, p. B1.

⁴⁹ In the days immediately following 9/11, analysts feared that al-Qaeda represented a new type of terrorism: millennial in character, monolithic in nature, global in scope, huge in scale and equipped with weapons of mass destruction that would render its challenge more existential than any previously encountered. More recent scholarship indicates that al-Qaeda comprises a relatively small inner circle of bin Laden followers, a panoply of loosely linked but similarly motivated spin-off groups, and a guiding ideology that motivates both the original organization and its clones. See Burke, 7-17. For a broader overview of the variance resident in the Islamic militant camp, see Esposito, 243-253.

⁵⁰ Coups are far more prevalent historically than revolutions wrought by insurgency. Walter Laqueur's dated but still valuable study notes that between 1960 and 1975 120 coups took place while only five guerrilla movements came to power (three in Portuguese Africa, one in Laos and one in Cambodia). See Laqueur, 408. The Islamic government in Sudan, for example, came to power via a coup supported by the Sudanese army in June 1989. See Burke, 132.

⁵¹ Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 240.

⁵² Bin Laden's emphasis on defeating America before overthrowing apostate Islamic states represents a significant switch in philosophy and strategy from that of previous Islamic militant groups. See *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 170-177.

⁵³ Normally al-Qaeda's networking receives the lion's share of the analytical attention, but it is perhaps even more important that the group is one of only two multi-ethnic militant movements formed since 1968. (The other is Aum Shinrikyo, another religiously based organization that employs terror in pursuit of its policy objectives.) This open door policy enables al-Qaeda to mobilize disaffected Muslims worldwide. Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 87.

⁵⁴ Steven Metz first suggested the concept of a 'spiritual insurgency.' Metz posited that an insurgency's ideology, goals and strategy are less important than its psychological motivation in terms of understanding its character. To that end, he coined both 'spiritual' and 'criminal' as categories of insurgency worthy of further study. See Steven Metz, *The Future of Insurgency* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1993), 9.

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